



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

TODD P. GRAVES

Contact Don Ledford, Public Affairs • (816) 426-4220 • 400 East Ninth Street, Room 5510 • Kansas City, MO 64106

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Note: Court documents associated with this case may be downloaded
from the district's Web site at*

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow/news2006/thomas_information.pdf
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow/news2006/thomas_plea_agreement.pdf

PENNSYLVANIA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO PERSUADING A MINOR TO PRODUCE CHILD PORN

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Pennsylvania man pleaded guilty in federal court today to persuading a northwest Missouri girl to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing child pornography.

Jeffrey Stephen Thomas, 37, of Philadelphia, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Howard F. Sachs this afternoon to a federal information that charges him with enticing a minor to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing child pornography. Under the terms of today's plea agreement, the government will dismiss the charges contained in a July 20, 2005, federal indictment at the time of **Thomas'** sentencing.

By pleading guilty today, **Thomas** admitted that he communicated with the victim, who was 14 years old when they met in an Internet chat room in September 2003, over a two-year period via telephone and private instant-messaging. **Thomas** eventually escalated these conversations to become sexual in nature, Graves said, and urged her to mail to him sexually explicit photos of herself. She refused initially, but after persistent requests from **Thomas**, later photographed herself in sexually explicit poses and mailed the photos to **Thomas**.

"**Thomas** told the victim that he was going to take her away from her troubled home life and back with him to Pennsylvania to begin a life together," Graves said. "He promised her marriage, children, SUVs, a new house, dogs, and a better life away from her home and parents."

Thomas told the victim that he would travel to Missouri, pick her up, and drive them back together to Pennsylvania to begin their life together.

On April 15, 2005, **Thomas** traveled from his Pennsylvania residence and picked up the victim near her home in northwest Missouri. “Instead of taking her back with him to Pennsylvania as they had previously discussed,” Graves said, “he took her to a local Comfort Inn hotel.” Over the next two days, **Thomas** engaged in a variety of sexual conduct with the victim. **Thomas** only left the hotel room to obtain food and KY lubricant.

At the end of the weekend, **Thomas** deposited the victim near her home. “He told her he would return for her after covering his tracks better,” Graves said. “He promised that, when he returned, he would take her back with him to Pennsylvania.”

The photos **Thomas** requested the victim take of herself were found at his residence during the execution of a federal search warrant.

Under federal statutes, **Thomas** could be subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in federal prison without parole, up to 30 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$250,000. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Cynthia L. Phillips. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Nodaway County, Mo., Sheriff’s Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow